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AUTHOR Reinhardt-Childers, Ilva
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ABSTRACT

A college course in commercial Spanish is described. The course objectives are to: build a solid foundation of business and professional vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation; prepare for oral and written communication with commonly-used Spanish business phrases and terminology; expose students to the different types of written communication in Spanish, including different kinds of business letters; and reinforce skills and knowledge through written practice drills. Eighteen types of written communication are studied: acknowledgements, circulars, claims, collections, credit application letters, credit references, credit rejections, employment applications, employment rejections, employment verifications, letters requesting product information, memoranda, offers of employment, orders, personal references, recommendations, replies to product information inquiries, and sales letters. Vocabulary and phrases studied include those used in Latin America. (MSE)

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COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

by

Ilva Reinhardt-Childers
El Camino College
Torrance, California

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COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATION

IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

The word "communication" has been given several meanings. The American Heritage Dictionary defines "communication" as "an act or instance of sharing, as of thoughts and feelings;"[1] Velazquez's Spanish and English Dictionary's definition is: "junction or union of one thing with another;"[2] The Bantam New College Spanish Dictionary defines "communication" as "connection"[3] and the Webster's High School Dictionary's definition is "an act or instance of transmitting; the information communicated; an exchange of information; the interchange of ideas and opinions."[4]

Without communication, life would stand still. Communication is a vital instrument of life. It is the lifeline of the business world.

In this day and age, it is no longer frivolous to speak or understand more than one language, it is often a necessity. Educators touch many lives. Students, whether they become professionals or skilled workers, or whether they choose any other path in life, should at least be able to communicate properly. This communication should not only be in English, but in another language, and for the purpose of this paper, in Spanish.

In the business world, to be bi-lingual is very often an important skill for employment survival. In today's educational system there is a need for a broader availability of business communication courses in the Spanish language at different levels. This is not only needed in our higher educational system, but should be introduced at the secondary school level.

Students need to learn not only the basics of Spanish grammar, composition and conversation, but they also need to go one step further. They should be able to apply the basics of Spanish to the career or profession they select for their lives.

There are several reasons why college students enroll in Spanish courses: they may want to learn the language for their own personal enrichment, maybe they plan to travel to a Spanish-speaking country, or maybe they want to use it as a major or minor field while working toward a degree. Others might want to study Spanish to be able to communicate, whether socially or at the job scene. Whichever reasons these students may have, they all have one goal in common: to be able to communicate.

I have designed a course outline for commercial communication in the Spanish language. Though technology and systems change from day to day, certain aspects of business communication do not change or evolve as rapidly. For instance, terminology, written communication, and even most business forms are still the same as they were in the 1950's. The memo form, for example, is exactly the same as it was thirty years ago. Letterheads have not changed much, and business envelopes have not changed at all. They are

the same size and shape they used to be. Most of us know that at the present time many letterheads and business envelopes are colored, whereas thirty years ago they were mainly white.

Letterwriting in the Spanish language has changed very little. The terminology used in Spain in the 1950's, for instance, is still in use and seems somewhat obsolete in the modern business world of the eighties. Many Spanish terms could and maybe should be changed or even deleted in order to make written business communication in Spanish simpler.

The course syllabus I have developed is geared toward an individual who has completed two years (or equivalent) of Spanish. This course has been summarized as follows:

A practical course designed for students and professionals who wish to learn and use business Spanish. Different types of business letters and written business communication will be studied in-depth. Students will be exposed to an intensive business vocabulary including business words, phrases, and terminology used both in Spain and Latin America. This will aid the student in developing her/his own style of business communication. Effective oral communication is emphasized. A variety of unconventional, modern-day situations dealing with everyday business situations will be enacted in the classroom. Employment interviews in Spanish, resume writing, requests for services and business conversational skills will be developed. Also basic conversational skills necessary for reception desks, office and answering telephones will be included.

This course has been designed with four major objectives in mind:

1- To build a solid foundation of business and professional vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

2- To prepare one to be able to communicate both orally and in writing using commonly used Spanish business phrases and terminology.

3- To expose one to the different types of written communication in Spanish, including different types of business letters.

4- To reinforce the acquired knowledge by intensely applying the vocabulary and different letter formats through written practice drills.

Included in the course are eighteen (18) different types of written communication such as:

1- Acknowledgements
2- Circulars
3- Claims
4- Collections
5- Credit application letters
6- Credit references
7- Credit rejection
8- Employment application

9- Employment rejection

10- Employment verification

11- Letters requesting product information

12- Memoranda

13- Offer of employment

14- Orders

15- Personal references

16- Recommendations

17- Reply to product information inquiry

18- Sales letters

Several sample letters of the same type are used in order to utilize different Spanish business terminology. After the sample letters have been thoroughly studied, the student is provided with data to be used in composing five (5) different pieces of Spanish business communication. Each section will include a new vocabulary list. This method will help build written communication skills.

The vocabulary not only consists of Spanish words and phrases used in Spain, but also those used in Latin America. I have compiled a dictionary for this course that consists of commercial terminology in the Spanish Language (Spanish-English, English-Spanish).

Upon completing the course, the student should know

the basic vocabulary of business Spanish (words and phrases) necessary to be able to prepare business letters and pieces of written communication. It should be noted that this course is geared toward a simpler business Spanish communication rather than the very formal form used by Spanish writers.

In conclusion, the student who masters the art of communicating using the terminology and style just described will be much more effective in the business world.

ILVA REINHARDT-CHILDERS

El CAMINO COLLEGE
Torrance, California

ADDRESS (8/1-9/1/87)

1977 North 9th St.
Laramie, WY 82070

4502 Eastbrook Avenue
Lakewood, CA 90713
(213) 421-9570

FOOTNOTES

[1]American Heritage Dictionary (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), p. 299.

[2]Velazquez, Spanish and English Dictionary (Piscataway: New Century Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 179.

[3]The Bantam New College Spanish and English Dictionary (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981), p. 78.

[4]Webster's High School Dictionary (Lexington: Ginn and Company, 1982), p. 179.